

Barth

**Morgan Barth – Elm City College Prep
Education Committee Hearing
March 15, 2010**

My name is Morgan Barth and I am the principal of Elm City College Prep Elementary, a New Haven public-charter school. Elm City College Prep is part of the Achievement First network. Thank you, committee members, and chairman/chairwoman for giving me the chance to testify. I am speaking on behalf of H.B. 5493, "An Act Concerning Strategic Planning in State Education Policy and Charter School Funding."

I am proud to report that our hard-working scholars, parents and teachers have made Elm City College Prep one of our state's top performing urban public schools. This week our scholars are taking some of their CMT tests. Our performance on last year's CMTs ranked us # 1 for African American performance in the state, #4 for overall improvement in the state and # 2 in overall performance in the City of New Haven. Right now 100% of our Kindergarteners read at or above grade level.

Behind these numbers are even more impressive stories. Stories of scholars who enter our school two or three years behind grade level...and great teachers who get them caught up. Sincere, a student with us tonight won a lottery seat last spring. Having already finished first grade he could not read at all. He has improved almost 2 full grade levels in the last six months.

As you can imagine it's pretty hard work running a school. One thing I don't want to worry about is making sure our school will be re-funded each spring. The funding system proposed in this bill makes sense. It is time to eliminate the use of the annual state appropriation process to fund public-charter schools; and it's time to adopt a "money follows the child" funding mechanism.

I believe that the fair and logical thing to do is to base funding for public-charter schools on the average amount spent to educate students in the host-district.

I understand that the proposed bill also provides each public-charter school with a per-pupil facilities allowance, based on the statewide average of district expenditures. Elm City packs into a small school building that we lease from the

Catholic diocese. In addition to raising money to close our funding gap, we must fundraise just to pay the rent.

Why make these changes now?

- 1) The annual appropriations process is cumbersome, inefficient and illogical, especially given our track-record of success
- 2) This proposed legislation saves money because it will end the process of double-funding for students who leave traditional district schools for charters, magnets and tech schools
- 3) We want to win in Race to the Top's second round. Other arguments aside, these changes are well worth the 200 million dollar grant
- 4) The President of the United States has asked us to rally behind this kind of common sense school reform. It's our duty as Americans to act to close Connecticut's achievement gap—the biggest in the country. Money follows the child helps schools that are actually closing the gap
- 5) Lastly, it's the right thing to do. I know you need to close a budget gap. Currently we're funded at about 75% of what traditional district schools receive per-pupil. Our hard working, tax-paying parents and their hard-working, college-bound kids aren't 25% less important just because they made a choice to attend a public-charter school. Money follows the child is fair. My kids sitting back here are worth fully funding

Thank you again for allowing me to testify on behalf of H.B. 5493.